

Content, Mood, and Force

I. The standard picture

What I am going to call the ‘standard picture’ in speech act theory is due to John Searle (taking inspiration from Frege, Reichenbach, Stenius, Austin, Hare and Wittgenstein). It consists of two main claims :

- (1) Leaving aside the speech acts which are devoid of representational content (‘expressives’, in Searle’s classification), the content of a speech act is always of the same semantic type : it is a proposition.¹ Thus, the order ‘Go to the store, John !’, the question ‘Will John go to the store ?’ and the assertion ‘John will go to the store’ differ by their *illocutionary force* (that of an order, a question, and an assertion respectively) but they (allegedly) share the same *content* : they represent the same state of affairs (John going to the store), corresponding to the same proposition (that John will go to the store). So understood, speech act content is ‘force neutral’.
- (2) So-called ‘sentence moods’ — that is the devices, whatever they are, that differentiate clause-types into declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamative, etc. — encode illocutionary force and do not affect representational content. They are ‘illocutionary force indicating devices’ (IFIDs, as they used to be called in the seventies).

I mentioned Austin among the forerunners of the standard picture, because he put forward something akin to the content/force distinction (the distinction between the ‘locutionary’ act and the ‘illocutionary’ act), and insisted that there are illocutionary force indicators, free of descriptive or representational content. It is, I think, uncontroversial that Austin embraced claim (2) of the standard picture. But his locutionary/illocutionary distinction is notoriously hard to interpret, and it is not totally clear that he accepted claim (1) above. To his view I now turn.

¹ Of course, there may be constraints on the specific propositions that can be the content of a given speech act – for example, according to Searle, the content of a directive speech act can only be a proposition about a future action of the hearer. For a critique of this constraint, see Recanati 1981/87 : 161-63 and 2007a : 127-28.

2. The Austinian picture

To perform a locutionary act, Austin says, is to utter a grammatical sentence endowed with a definite meaning or content (which he glosses as ‘sense and reference’).² In performing a locutionary act, one typically also performs an illocutionary act, whose identity depends upon the ‘force’ of the utterance — something that is not part of its meaning or content in the narrow sense.³ So the locutionary act, in Austin’s framework, is the act of expressing a certain content, while the illocutionary act consists in the expression of a certain content with a certain force. Illocutionary force is construed as a supplementary dimension, something that comes on top of locutionary content. This certainly sounds a lot like the standard picture. Still, one cannot straightforwardly equate Austin’s locutionary/illocutionary distinction and Searle’s content/force distinction, because certain passages in Austin’s work suggest that he may have meant to include the contribution of sentence mood into the ‘locutionary’ content of an utterance (see Recanati 1981/1987 : chapter 9 for a detailed discussion).

To report the locutionary act performed by uttering a sentence, Austin says, we use indirect speech : the locutionary act performed by means of the sentence ‘The cat is on the mat’ is the act of *saying that the cat is on the mat*, the locutionary act performed by uttering ‘Get out’ is the act of *telling the addressee to get out*, the locutionary act performed by uttering ‘Is it in Oxford or Cambridge ?’ is the act of *asking whether it is in Oxford or Cambridge*. It is clear that in these reports, which are said to capture the locutionary content of the utterance, expressions like ‘say that’, ‘tell to’ and ‘ask whether’ track the mood of the uttered sentence. It seems, therefore, not impossible that Austin took declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences to express *different types of locutionary content*, as if the sentence moods contributed to locutionary content.

3. Searle’s critique of Austin

² To qualify as locutionary, the meaning of an expression must endow it with representational powers. Thus ‘Ouch’ has no locutionary meaning, for Austin (1975 : 33). This shows that the descriptive/referential dimension is essential to locutionary content.

³ ‘I want to distinguish force and meaning in the sense in which meaning is equivalent to sense and reference, just as it has become essential to distinguish sense and reference’ (Austin 1975 : Lec. 8)

Austin's remarks suggest that locutionary content includes as a proper part the force-neutral nucleus Searle talks about ('sense and reference', as Austin puts it), and adds to it the element contributed by sentence-mood, namely the indication regarding illocutionary force.

Locutionary content thus understood consists of two rather heterogeneous ingredients :

- a representational content that is made contextually specific in all relevant respects. (The locutionary act is the act of using words with a *determinate* sense and a *determinate* reference, Austin repeatedly says. Context and speaker's intentions play a crucial role in making them determinate.)
- a broad type of illocutionary force, namely that which is encoded by the sentence mood.

In contrast to sense-and-reference, force will only be made contextually determinate at the illocutionary level : at the locutionary level, the only element of force is what is encoded by sentence mood qua expression type.

Searle has strongly objected to this picture. When you put together a content (in the restricted, Searlean sense) and a force, however generic, what you get is an illocutionary act. So locutionary acts – the sort of thing one reports by saying 'he asked whether...', 'he said that...', or 'he told me to...' — are actually *illocutionary* acts. What distinguishes them from full-blooded illocutionary acts is only the fact that, at the so-called 'locutionary' level, the force of the utterance remains generic or (better) determinable. Contextual specification of force only comes into the picture at the next level — the 'illocutionary' level. According to Searle, however, the asymmetry between force and content as far as contextual specification is concerned has no justification, and once we get rid of it the whole distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts collapses. The only operative distinctions are : (i) the distinction between (neutral) content, i.e. sense-and-reference, and force ; and (ii) the distinction between the linguistic meaning of expression types and the contextually specified meaning of their utterances. This second distinction applies both to the linguistic forms which contribute to representational content and to those which indicate illocutionary force. It follows that the locutionary/illocutionary distinction

is only a special case of the distinction between literal meaning and intended meaning, between what the sentence means and what the speaker means in its utterance, and it has no special relevance to the general theory of illocutionary forces, because intended illocutionary force is only one of the aspects (sense and reference are others) in which

intended speaker-meaning may go beyond literal sentence-meaning. (Searle 1968 : 149)

4. Rescuing locutionary content

The Austinian distinction between the locutionary and the illocutionary act can be rescued from Searle's objection that Austin's 'locutionary act' is nothing but a generic illocutionary act ; and this can be done consistently with the standard picture.⁴

On the standard picture, the overall meaning of an utterance consists of two ingredients : the proposition expressed, and the illocutionary force indicated by the mood. The meaning of an utterance is therefore like an image of the speech act, in its two dimensions (force + content). *But the speech act thus depicted need not be the speech act the speaker actually performs by uttering the sentence.* There are well-known cases (e.g. indirect speech acts, irony) in which the speech act actually performed is not the speech act that is conventionally depicted.⁵ This suggests the following reinterpretation of Austin's locutionary/illocutionary distinction (Recanati 1981/1987 : chapter 9, 2007b, 2010 : chapter 6) :

- The 'locutionary act' is the act of *making an utterance which, in virtue of its meaning, presents a certain illocutionary act as being performed* (whether or not the act in question is actually performed).
- The 'illocutionary act' is *the illocutionary act actually performed* (whether or not it corresponds to what the sentence encodes).

The distinction between the two levels provides a way of integrating the two notions of assertion which Kölbel (2010) distinguishes : the 'conventional' notion (to assert is to utter a sentence of the assertive type, something one can do inadvertently) and the 'intentional' notion (to assert is to make an utterance with a certain kind of audience-directed intention, something one *cannot* do inadvertently). Both notions, C-assertion and I-assertion, are legitimate and an adequate account should make room for them. On my account, C-assertion corresponds to the case in which the speaker makes an utterance which presents itself as an I-

⁴ Below we shall consider alternative interpretations of Austin's distinction which reject claim 1 of the standard picture.

⁵ As McGinn puts it, 'mood... conventionally and standardly *signifies* force, but it cannot *guarantee* it' (McGinn 1977 : 303). This is an application of Davidson's thesis of 'the Autonomy of Linguistic Meaning' (Davidson 1979 ; for discussion, see Green 1997).

assertion. It is clear that, on this account, one notion is more basic than the other. The locutionary act is defined in terms of the illocutionary act : the locutionary act is the act of making an utterance that conventionally signifies the performance of a certain illocutionary act. Similarly, the act of C-assertion is defined in terms of the more basic notion of I-assertion.⁶

The distinction between the speech act which is depicted and the speech act which is performed is needed to account for irony and indirect speech acts (Recanati 1980). Taken seriously, it leads to a further distinction, which proves useful in semantic analysis : that between the ('external') context of the actual speech act and the ('internal') context of the illocutionary act which the speaker presents as being performed. Such a distinction, originally put forth by Ducrot (1980) and Recanati (1981/1987),⁷ is arguably the key to understanding complex phenomena such as the behaviour of indexicals in free indirect speech. (See Schlenker 2004 for a similar idea, and Recanati 2010 : 198-204 for a synthesis.)

5. Types of locutionary content

In a paper in which he tries to make sense of Austin's remarks,⁸ Strawson tentatively puts forward a division of locutionary contents into types, corresponding to clause-types (Strawson 2000: 206). Propositions (the bearers of truth and falsity) are the type of locutionary content expressed by declarative sentences, Strawson says. Imperative utterances are not evaluable as true or false, and this suggests that they do not express propositions, but a different type of locutionary content, which Strawson proposes to call an 'imperative' :

In every case in which a locution as a whole expresses a proposition, we should say that its locutionary meaning is the proposition expressed. For such other broad classes of locutions as we may find it expedient to distinguish from proposition-expressing locutions, we shall need terms of art comparable with the term 'proposition', to set beside the latter. Let us suppose that 'imperative' is one such term, imperatives being variously expressible with the force of pieces of advice, requests, commands, recommendations, prayers, invitations, etc. (...) A scheme for separately specifying the illocutionary force and the locutionary meaning of single utterances which, as

⁶ Another reason why the notion of illocutionary act (or the special case of I-assertion) is more basic is that locutionary acts are *typed* according to the type of illocutionary act they depict.

⁷ See also Sperber and Wilson 1981 for a hint in the same direction.

⁸ 'Austin and 'Locutionary Meaning'', first published in 1973 in I. Berlin et al., *Essays on J.L. Austin* (Oxford University Press), and reprinted in Strawson's collection, *Entity and Identity, and Other Essays* (2000).

wholes, express propositions or imperatives (or any other broad classes we find it expedient to distinguish) might be imagined as follows :

X issues the ___ (that ...) with the force of a ---

A specification of the general type of locutionary meaning fills the first blank, of specific locutionary content the second, of illocutionary force the third. Thus we might have such fillings as these :

X issues the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) proposition (that <i>S</i> is <i>P</i>) (2) imperative (that <i>Z</i> (person) is to <i>Y</i> (act)) (3) ?
as a with the force of a by way of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) accusation, report, forecast, conclusion, objection, hypothesis, guess, verdict, etc. (2) command, request, piece of advice, prayer, invitation, entreaty, etc. (3) ?

(Strawson 2000 : 206-207)

On this elaboration of the Austinian picture, speech acts with different types of force have different types of locutionary content. That means that one gives up tenet 1 of the standard picture: that the content of a speech act is always of the same semantic type, namely a proposition. On Strawson's proposal, propositions are only *one* semantic type, corresponding to the locutionary content of a particular family of speech acts. Other families of speech acts, such as directives, have locutionary content of a different semantic type. (See Pendlebury 1986 : 368-70 for a similar proposal.)⁹

Several recent theories have been put forward which follow Strawson's lead in rejecting tenet 1 of the standard picture. I will mention two such revisionary trends that have appeared in the recent literature, one in philosophy — in connection with the problem of the 'unity of the proposition' — and one in linguistics.

6. Locutionary content and the unity of the proposition

In 'The Force-Content Distinction' (Hanks 2007), Peter Hanks argues as follows. We need to include a modicum of illocutionary force into content because without such an addition there would be no content at all. Force-neutral content is a myth. Why is that so ? Because we need

⁹ Dummett (1973 : 307) objects to such proposals, on shaky grounds. See Recanati 1981/1987 : 260-66 for a critique of Dummett's position.

something to tie together the ingredients of content – that is the infamous problem of the ‘unity of the proposition’, which worried the founding fathers of analytic philosophy and is widely considered as still in need of a solution (see Gibson 2004, King 2007, Gaskin 2008, Soames 2010, Collins 2011). In a nutshell, the problem is this. If I assert that John is bald, the content of my assertion is the proposition that John is bald. That proposition has John and baldness as constituents, but it is more than a list or aggregate of constituents – it can be true or false. What is it that makes a truth-evaluable proposition out of an object and a property ? Hanks argues that what provides the ‘glue’ tying together the constituents of the proposition is actually the force, e.g. the fact that, when I assert that John is bald, I *ascribe* baldness to John or *assert* baldness of him.¹⁰ Hanks concludes that

the content–force distinction should be abandoned altogether. I am skeptical of the idea that there are propositional contents that represent states of affairs independently of what speakers do in making assertions or forming judgments. An account has to be given of how these contents represent states of affairs that does not make any appeal to the intentional actions of speakers. I doubt that there is any way to do this. (Hanks 2007 : 143)¹¹

Hanks therefore rejects the first tenet of the standard picture — claim (1) above, to the effect that speech act content is force-neutral. Speech act content is not force-neutral, and it does not even include a force-neutral content as a proper part. There is no force-neutral content, at the sentential level. Barker (2004) similarly bids ‘farewell to the sense/force distinction’ (Barker 2004 : 81). As he puts it, ‘there is no common stock of thoughts — propositional contents — that are shared by fully interpreted sentences across moods’ (Barker 2004 : 84).

7. The Frege-Geach point : predication vs assertion

¹⁰ When the speech act is not an assertion but, say, an order, it is not the assertive component but the imperative component that provides the glue tying together the object and the property.

¹¹ Friederike Moltmann holds a similar view : ‘John’s belief that he will win (or John’s expectation that he will win) is not a proposition, but rather what I call an *attitudinal object* (Moltmann, 2003). John’s belief that he is the winner is not a proposition because it has properties that relate specifically to the belief mode and the agent... The attitudinal mode can be seen as providing the ‘glue’ among the propositional constituents so as to guarantee that the attitudinal object have satisfaction conditions’ (Moltmann 2010 : 456-57).

One might think there is an obvious objection to the Barker-Hanks approach, related to the reason why the force/content distinction was introduced in the first place. This is the so-called ‘Frege-Geach point’ (Geach 1960, 1965).¹² If assertive force was part of the content of a sentence, all the occurrences of the sentence expressing that content ought to have that force. But precisely, for every indicative sentence, there can be occurrences of that sentence with assertive force and other occurrences without assertive force, while content remains unchanged. A proposition is unasserted when, for example, it is expressed by the antecedent of a conditional. Were it not for that fact that the same content can occur ‘now asserted and now unasserted’ (as Geach puts it), *modus ponens* would be invalid. It follows that assertive force is not — cannot be — part of content : content and force simply do not mix.¹³

Appearances notwithstanding, one can accept this view, and a strict content/force distinction, while *retaining* Hanks’s pragmatic solution to the problem of the unity of the proposition. One can maintain that what provides the ‘glue’ is an ‘intentional action of the speaker’, as Hanks puts it, provided the act in question is itself neutral with regard to the issue of illocutionary force. According to Soames, whose general view is otherwise very similar to Hanks’s, what provides the glue is the act of *predication*, which is performed whether the proposition is asserted or remains unasserted (Soames 2010).¹⁴ Predication is force-neutral, so using the act of predication (rather than the act of assertion) to unify the proposition is compatible with the standard picture and does not require rejecting the first of its two defining claims. One problem with this view, however, is that it is mysterious what exactly predication is. To predicate a property of an object, on this view, is *not* to ascribe it to the object – for that would take us back to the notion of assertion and to Hanks’s theory. On the other hand one cannot simply characterize ‘predication’ as whatever ties the object and the property together— for that would deprive the approach of any explanatory power.

Weakening Hanks’s theory in the manner of Soames is unnecessary, however ; for Hanks has a response to the Frege-Geach challenge.¹⁵ He denies a premise in the above

¹² In *Speech Acts*, Searle makes the same point in criticizing speech act theoretic approaches to the meaning of various locutions (Searle 1969 : 136-41).

¹³ This seems to entail as a corollary that mood and illocutionary force indicators should not embed. But it is not obvious that that is the case : see Pendlebury 1986, Green 2000 and Barker 2004 for discussion. This is a vast and complex topic which cries out for detailed linguistic investigation. (On the syntax and semantics of speech act embedding, see respectively Heycock 2006 and Krifka 2011.)

¹⁴ Both Austin and Strawson acknowledge an ‘ancillary act’ of predication intrinsic to the locutionary act.

¹⁵ See Barker 2004 for a similar response.

argument : ‘If assertive force was part of the content, all the occurrences of the sentence expressing that content ought to have that force’. Instead, Hanks admits that some occurrences will not have the force, not because force is not part of content, but because there are *cancelling devices* such that when a content (with a force ingredient) occurs in the scope of the device, the force ingredient is cancelled :

Frege’s main reason for adopting the content–force distinction—the fact that we do not assert the antecedent or the consequent in an utterance of a conditional—is consistent with thinking that an assertoric element is included in the contents of declarative sentences. Frege’s reaction to this fact about conditionals was to hold that the contents of declarative sentences are devoid of any assertive element, but this is not the only reaction one might have. An alternative is to hold that in certain contexts, for example, when a sentence is used inside a conditional, the assertive element is cancelled by the presence of the conditional. (Hanks 2011: 15)

8. Mood and force (1)

Another revisionary trend has appeared in the recent linguistics literature. It rejects not only the first tenet of the standard picture, but also the second tenet, namely the claim that sentence mood encodes illocutionary force. Sentence moods admittedly *correlate* with types of force, but this is different from *encoding* them (Kissine 2013). According to Paul Portner (2004), what a clause-type expresses is nothing but a speech act *content* – it does *not* include a force component – but speech acts with different types of force happen to have different types of content. Declarative, imperative and interrogative utterances have different types of content, on this view, and the different types of content they have enable them to serve in the performance of different types of speech acts. Declarative utterances express propositions, and propositions are *what we assert* : this is sufficient to forge a link between the declarative mood and the force of assertion, without having to suppose that the declarative mood directly encodes the illocutionary force of assertion. Likewise for the other moods : what they encode is a distinctive type of content, one that happens to correlate with a certain type of force.

As far as questions are concerned, there is indeed a consensus among formal semanticists, to the effect that interrogative sentences do not express propositions (functions from worlds to truth-values), but contents of a different type, e.g. functions from worlds to propositions (Groenendijk and Stockhof) or functions from worlds to sets of propositions (Hamblin-Karttunen). Like Hausser before him (Hausser 1980), Portner generalizes this move

and takes the content of imperative utterances to be also a semantic object of a non-propositional type. Which object ? Portner says it is a property. Simplifying somewhat, the (familiar) idea is that the content of an imperative utterance like ‘Go home’ is the property of going home.¹⁶

Since a proposition is or determines a function from worlds to truth-values, it can be evaluated as true or false (at a world). Being truth-evaluable, it can be asserted, i.e. presented as true at the actual world and put forward as a candidate for inclusion in the ‘common ground’ (Stalnaker 1978). Imperative and interrogative contents don’t determine a function from worlds to truth-values, so they cannot be evaluated as true or false (at a world), and they cannot be asserted. However, the content of a question can be added to the ‘question-set’ which plays for questions the same role as the common ground for assertions (Ginzburg 1995a, 1995b ; Ginzburg & Sag 2001); and similarly, according to Portner, the content of an imperative can be added to the hearer’s ‘to-do list’ (Portner 2004).

To sum up : while the standard speech-act theoretic picture rests on the twin ideas that content type is shared across speech acts and that sentence mood encodes force, the revisionary picture put forward by Portner breaks entirely with this tradition. Portner holds that different speech acts have different types of content, and denies that sentence mood encodes force.¹⁷

9. Mood and force (2)

Portner’s wholesale rejection of the standard picture, including the second tenet, forces him to account for the correlation between sentence moods and illocutionary forces indirectly, by positing special types of content expressed by interrogative, declarative and imperative sentences respectively. These contents happen to be the contents appropriate for speech acts with respectively interrogative, assertive and directive force, but the forces in question are not

¹⁶ Properties have already been used as semantic type, by Lewis in his theory of *de se* attitudes (Lewis 1979). On Lewis’s story, to assert something is to self-ascribe the property that is the content of the *de se* assertion. One might similarly hold that to issue a command is to ascribe to the hearer, in all the worlds compatible with the command (i.e. the worlds that are *options* for the hearer), the property that is the content of the command.

¹⁷ There is room also for hybrid positions — positions according to which the standard picture (or one of its tenets) is justified in certain cases and the revisionary picture in other cases. Thus Frege took declaratives and yes-no interrogatives to express the same type of content (in accordance with the standard picture), but imperatives to express a different type of content altogether (in accordance with the revisionary picture).

directly encoded by the clause-types to which they correspond. The speech act of questioning takes questions as content, and questions are expressed by interrogative sentences. Assertion takes propositions as content, and propositions are expressed by declarative sentences. Directives take ‘hearer’s properties’ as content, and imperative sentences express such properties, according to Portner.

For interrogatives, as I said, most semanticists accept the claim that, in contrast to declaratives, they don’t express propositions. If they don’t, then, as Portner argues, we don’t have to treat the interrogative mood as an indicator of illocutionary force. The fact that interrogative sentences express the sort of content suitable for the speech act of questioning is enough to forge a link between that mood and that illocutionary force. So we can tentatively accept the revisionary picture for interrogatives.¹⁸

For imperatives, however, things are far less clear. The analysis of imperative sentences remains, to this day, very much an open issue, and further investigations into their syntax and semantics are needed before we can adjudicate between the various proposals currently on the table (see Iatridou 2008 for an overview of the field). One of the proposals on the table is the old analysis inspired by the standard picture : it takes imperatives to have propositional content and to indicate the performance of an act of directive type.

What about declaratives ? Here, Portner seems to be on safe ground. Everybody accepts that declarative sentences express propositions, and that propositions are the sort of thing we can assert or believe. That, it seems, is enough to forge the link which Portner wants between declaratives and the act of assertion. However, I think we should be more cautious. In my early work I offered reasons to doubt the existence of such a link, and I will end this review with a few considerations regarding that topic.

10. The force and content of declaratives

In Recanati 1981/1987 I introduced a fundamental distinction, based upon the ‘direction of fit’, between two broad types of illocutionary force for utterances. An utterance has ‘performative force’ whenever it is meant to *bring about the state of affairs it represents*,

¹⁸ At least we can do so on standard parsimony assumptions. But parsimony may be the wrong sort of consideration. Maybe interrogative sentences both express a special type of content suited to the act of questioning *and* ‘mark’ that force through an IFID (Krifka 2011). This ‘redundancy’ approach has one advantage : in so-called declarative questions, we could say that a proposition is expressed (not a question) but the utterance is nevertheless marked as a question.

rather than *report* or *describe* the fact that that state of affairs obtains ('constative force'). In that work I assumed that imperatives, commissives etc. have propositional content and represent a state of affairs, in accordance with the standard picture, and I took directive/commissive force to be a special case — a sub-type — of performative force. In directives, the state of affairs represented by the utterance is supposed to come about *through some action performed by the hearer because of the utterance*. Directives are therefore characterized by the fact that the causal chain from the utterance to the state of affairs involves an intermediary step : the utterance *motivates the hearer to act* so as to bring about the state of affairs. Commissives, another type of speech acts with performative force, also feature mediated causation, but it is the speaker, not the hearer, whom the utterance motivates to act so as to bring about the state of affairs it represents. Directives and commissives alike differ from other performative speech acts which, like declarations, are supposed to bring about the state of affairs they represent without specifically burdening the speaker or the hearer.

Now, whatever we think of that analysis of directives and commissives (which presupposes the standard picture), it is a striking fact that, quite systematically, declarative sentences — which undoubtedly express propositions — have *both* constative and performative readings. 'The session is open' is a standard example of a performative utterance, whose role is to make it true that the session is open, but that sentence can also be uttered as a constative, with words to world direction of fit. A similar case is that of 'it's yours' : an utterance of that sentence can be understood as an assertion (reporting the fact that it's yours) or as a declaration, making it the case that it's yours (in which case the proper answer is 'Really ? Thanks !'). Like the shopping list in Anscombe's famous example, declarative sentences can be taken in two different ways according to the direction of fit. Anscombe's example is that of a man who goes to the market with a shopping list and is followed by a detective who makes a list of everything he buys (Anscombe 1963 : 56). The two lists are identical because both correspond to the man's purchases, but the direction of fit is not the same : the man's purchases conform to the shopping list provided by his wife, while the detective's list conforms to the man's purchases. Now the shopping list in Anscombe's example could be replaced by a declarative utterance by the wife — 'you are going to buy X, Y and Z' — the role of which would also be to make it the case that the husband buys X, Y and Z. Like 'It's yours' and 'The session is open', such a sentence could be uttered as a constative as well (if the wife was predicting her husband's purchases). In general, a sentence like 'You are going to do A' can be an order, a promise, a declaration or a wish as well as a

prediction, a guess, an accusation or an announcement. This is very different from imperative sentences, which can only be used performatively.¹⁹ If, in the shopping list example, the wife had said ‘Buy X, Y, and Z’, the directive force of her utterance would be marked in such a way that the sentence *could not* be understood as a constative. In virtue of the imperative mood, an utterance of that sentence is bound to have the world to words direction of fit. The point of such an utterance can only be to make it the case that the represented state of affairs obtains, or that the hearer perform the represented action (if we think that the content of an imperative is not a proposition but an action of the hearer).

The asymmetry I have emphasized between declarative and imperative sentences suggests that the declarative mood, in contrast to other sentence moods, does not set particular constraints on illocutionary force and leaves it free. In my early work, I argued that declarative sentences express propositions, but do not encode any illocutionary force (Recanati 1981/1987, 1982). Thus a declarative utterance can be performative as well as constative.²⁰ Portner also says that declarative sentences express propositions, without encoding any illocutionary force ; but he maintains that the declarative clause-type correlates with assertion, even if it does not encode that illocutionary force. The correlation is established through the link between propositions and assertion. So both the standard picture and Portner’s revisionary picture accept the correlation between the declarative mood and assertion, even though they account for it differently. But, as a matter of empirical fact, it is doubtful that there is any such correlation. With imperative sentences, we notice what many authors describe as a wide variety of uses, but those uses remain unified by certain properties like the world to words direction of fit.²¹ No such unification makes sense for the uses of declarative sentences, so those who wish to maintain a strict correspondence between force,

¹⁹ There are tricky examples, such as ‘Come and I shoot you’, whose performative character is far from obvious. Since it is unclear what the proper semantic analysis of such examples is, I ignore them here.

²⁰ The performative/constative contrast was originally introduced by Austin as a contrast between two types of *declarative* utterances — or, more accurately, between two types of uses of declarative sentences.

²¹ See e.g. the list of uses of imperatives in Han (1999). Among them, *wishes* are the most difficult case for an analysis of imperatives based on direction of fit, but even in that case the analysis can be defended : wishes can be argued to have performative (world to words) direction of fit. (Even though the wisher’s utterance ‘Get well soon’ cannot *rationaly* be expected to play any causal role in bringing about what it represents, still, one may argue, the wisher presents it as having the — magical — power to do so.) For a critique of this type of analysis, see Kissine 2013.

mood and content-type have to set the performative uses of declarative sentences aside (e.g. by treating such uses as ‘indirect speech acts’).²²

On my view, not only is the constative force not encoded by the declarative mood ; it does not correlate with it either. In contrast to other clause-types, declarative sentences do not correlate with *any* category of illocutionary force. They are illocutionarily neutral. A declarative sentence represents a state of affairs, that is all ; how the representation is interpreted (in illocutionary terms) is left to context. (Of course there is a blocking effect due to the competition with the other moods — those which do correlate with types of illocutionary force.)

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²² An alternative would be to give up direction of fit as the master criterion and to use an orthogonal criterion. That is what Kissine (2013) does. According to him the relevant contrast is between two types of locutionary contents : ‘potential’ and ‘non-potential’. This contrast is encoded by mood, and it correlates with the contrast between two big classes of illocutionary acts. In this framework, declarative sentences are on the side of the ‘non-potential’, *whether they are used constatively or performatively*. Imperative sentences fall on the other side — their locutionary content is ‘potential’.

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